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Progress report of the Task Force to Establish Standards on Data and Metadata Exchange

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session, (see E/2010/24, chap. I.A), the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the progress report of the Task Force to Establish Standards on Data and Metadata Exchange, which is presented to the Commission for information. The Commission is requested to take note of the report.

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Progress report of the Task Force to Establish Standards on Data and Metadata Exchange

I. Introduction

1. In 2001, the Bank for International Settlements, the European Central Bank, the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United Nations joined together to develop more efficient processes and standards for exchanging and sharing data and metadata within the scope of their statistical activities. The World Bank joined the initial group of sponsor organizations in 2003.

2. The aim of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) initiative is to create and maintain technical and statistical standards and guidelines, together with information technology architecture and tools, to be used and implemented by the sponsor or other organizations dealing with statistical data and metadata. Combined with modern information technologies, these SDMX standards and guidelines should improve efficiency by preventing duplication of effort. The SDMX standards and guidelines build on existing technical and statistical standards. With the 2009 releases, the SDMX standards and guidelines reached a high level of maturity and are ready for broad implementation

3. The Statistical Commission has received SDMX progress reports since 2002. The Commission has recognized and supported the SDMX standards and guidelines as "the preferred standard for the exchange and sharing of data and metadata", requested the sponsors to continue their work and encouraged national and international statistical organisations to increase the use and implementation of SDMX.[1]

II. SDMX developments in 2010/2011

A. SDMX technical standards 2.1

4. SDMX technical standards 2.0 are currently being revised. The draft 2.1 technical standards fix bugs and improve technical features relating to web services, structure queries and registry interface reconciliation, code lists and the SDMX data formats. Backward compatibility is ensured as much as possible and conversion issues will be explained in the underlying documentation. After a public consultation period in late 2010, the SDMX sponsors aim to release the SDMX 2.1 technical standards in the first months of 2011.

B. SDMX governance

5. The SDMX sponsors decided to strengthen the involvement of national data-producing agencies in the maintenance and development of SDMX by setting up two SDMX working groups, one covering SDMX technical standards and one

[1] Decision 39/112 in *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2008, Supplement No. 4* (E/2008/24), chap. I.B.

looking into the SDMX content-oriented guidelines. A call for participation in these two groups was sent out to the constituencies of SDMX sponsors in late 2010. Based on agreed terms of reference, the two SDMX working groups should start their work in 2011.

C. Implementation of SDMX among sponsoring and other statistical organizations

6. Further progress was made in implementing SDMX among sponsoring and other statistical organizations. Main flagship activities include:

- Use of the SDMX hub architecture for specific statistical domains or broader data sets (e.g. for the Principal Global Indicators or for the European Union population and housing census 2011)
- Use of the SDMX Content-Oriented Guidelines for international metadata standards (such as the BPM6 and the Euro SDMX Metadata Structure)

7. However, the implementation of the SDMX standards and guidelines in statistical organizations has hit increased resource constraints resulting from the economic and financial crisis. Organizations have also expressed the need for more SDMX data structure definitions used in statistical domains.

D. SDMX Global Conference 2011

8. The next SDMX Global Conference will take place in Washington D.C., from 2 to 4 May 2011. The draft programme is available on the SDMX website (http://sdmx.org) and the SDMX sponsors are calling for contributions and papers. The conference will focus on the use and implementation of the SDMX standards and guidelines, with specific emphasis on cases of practical use, and will illustrate the costs/benefits of SDMX for statistical organizations. It will also take stock of what has been achieved after 10 years of SDMX development.

E. SDMX capacity-building

9. Knowledge about SDMX is continuing to accrue at national and international levels within each of the sponsoring organizations and their respective constituencies. Seminars and workshops are being held all over the world to discuss how to use and implement SDMX at various levels (e.g. the SDMX workshop for South American countries in February 2011). Moreover, additional SDMX self-learning packages are now available on the SDMX website.

III. Summary

10. The SDMX technical and statistical standards and guidelines, combined with information technology architecture and tools, facilitate the efficient exchange and sharing of statistical data and metadata. SDMX plays a leading role in supporting the improvement and integration of statistical business processes. This is gaining importance in many statistical organizations around the world, as a result of increasing resource constraints.

11. SDMX is increasingly used and implemented in statistical organizations. Both national and international organizations are involved in SDMX, maintaining the SDMX standards and guidelines and implementing them in statistical domains.

12. SDMX capacity-building is progressing at many levels on the basis of seminars, workshops and other knowledge-building facilities.